



THREE FIGURED OSTRAKA
FROM THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN COLLECTION
OF THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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Ostraka of the Ancient Egyptian Collection

The Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of Middle East and Africa at the Náprstek Museum, section of the National Museum in Prague, Czechoslovakia, keeps in his Ancient Egyptian Collection a series of 148 ostraka. (Their inventory numbers are marked by P).

Among them, the greatest number are ostraka with *demotic* texts (77 pieces), mostly written on limestone chips (58 pieces, 4 of them tablets with perforations, probably mummy tags), exceptionally on sandstone (1 piece) or marble fragments (1 piece), the rest on pottery sherds (17 pieces). The next group are ostraka with *hieratic* texts (49 pieces), mostly written on limestone chips (37 pieces), fewer on pottery sherds (12 pieces). The third group is made of ostraka with Coptic texts (16 pieces), 13 of which are written on pottery sherds, two on limestone chips, and one on a wooden tablet. The last textual ostrakon bears a *Greek* text written on a pottery sherd.

The five remaining ostraka do not contain written records except for one where a short text appears as a complement of the main figured content (see further ostrakon P 2059).

There is a regularly shaped thick limestone tablet which contains low reliefs of a human head, face, eye and ear, of a seated goddess Isis and god Osiris, of a walking god holding a sceptre, of a falcon head etc. The reliefs are irregularly dispersed on all sides of the tablet (P 482). It could have been a sketch-piece of an apprentice of a school for carvers of reliefs.

Another flat limestone chip is covered on its obverse by careless scrawling of indeterminable signs, symbols and irregular lines produced by brush in black and red, mostly superimposed (P 2032). This could have been another sketch-piece whose authors tried to master the basic technics of drawing.

The last three ostraka represent true figured ostraka with a definite content and will be dealt with in detail in the following parts of our paper (P 2059—2061).

The provenance and manner of acquisition of the majority of the ostraka are known. Altogether 122 of them were given by l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire to the Czech Egyptologist Professor Dr. Jaroslav Černý as a token of recognition of his collaboration in the French archaeological excavations of the village and tombs of the royal workmen at Deir el-Medina in 1929—1937. In 1937 Černý donated 110 ostraka to the Oriental Institute in Prague, which in 1972 transmitted 35 of them to the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum (P 3801—3833, P 3837—3838). The 75 remaining ostraka, mainly demotic and Coptic, came on a long-term loan to the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology, Charles University, whose then head, Dr. František Váhala, handed them over to the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity also in 1972 (P 3839—3913). One ostrakon with a hieratic inscription on a pottery sherd was given by Černý to the Department of Prehistory nad Protohistory of the National Museum in Prague in 1946 (original inv. no. 1826), from where it was transferred with the whole Egyptian collection of this Department into the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum on its foundation date, 1st January 1969.

Recently we found out that Černý donated additional 11 ostraka from Deir el-Medina, mostly hieratic with a few demotic, to his father, a customs' officer, Mr. Antonín Černý. After his death shortly before beginning of World War II they were inherited by his son, Ing. Miloslav Černý, member of the staff of the Research Institute for Foodstuffs in Prague. In 1987 Depart-

ment of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum acquired these ostraka from his widow, Mrs. Anna Černá (P 7215—7225).

Another collection of 21 ostraka was presented to the Department of Prehistory and Protohistory of the National Museum in Prague by the Russian Egyptologist Professor Gregor Lukjanov, then living in Cairo, as an homage to the memory of his late friend Dr. Cyril Dušek, the first ambassador of the Czechoslovak Republic in Egypt, in late twenties of this century (original inv. nos. 448—460, 462—465 with 463 doubled, 467—469). There is no indication of their provenance. On 1st January 1969 18 of them were transferred to the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum (P 2014—2026, 2029, 2031—2034). Curiously enough, the remaining three came to the same Department via the Oriental Institute in Prague together with Černý's ostraka in 1972. One of these ostraka (original inv. no. 459, P 3835) was — according to the short report by Lexa (1931) — presented to the National Museum by Dušek himself.

An ostrakon with a demotic inscription on a pottery sherd was donated to the Department of Prehistory and Protohistory of the National Museum by Mrs. Lidka Babková, the widow of the Czechoslovak Consul in Cairo in 1949 without any indication as to its provenance. From there it was transmitted to the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum on the 1st of January 1969 (P 2028).

The above mentioned limestone tablet with sketches of reliefs came from the private collection of the castle at Mnichovo Hradiště in Northern Bohemia (original inv. no. I 26), from where it was transferred to the Náprstek Museum as an object of confiscation by the National Cultural Commission in 1948 (P 482). No provenance data are available.

The three figured ostraka in question were originally a part of the collection of the Department of Prehistory and Protohistory of the National Museum (inv. nos. 1413 and 1414 of the catalogue of the antique collection, the last piece being without a number). According to Lexa (1931) the first of them (inv. no. 1413) was presented to the Museum by Dr. C. Dušek in the twenties. In the catalogue of the antique collection Thebes as its probable place of origin is given. No data are mentioned for the following ostrakon (inv. no 1414), but a similar way of acquisition and pro-

venance seem to be highly probable. The third piece, whose original inventory number was not found in the three volumes of the catalogue, could not be checked. The three figured ostraka were transmitted to the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of the Náprstek Museum on the 1st of January 1969 (P 2059, 2060, 2061).

Only five of the ostraka of our collection have been already published; viz. the ostrakon with a hieratic text on a pottery sherd P 2027 (Černý 1946, Černý and Gardiner 1947, pl. 70,2, Allam 1973: 246), the ostrakon with a hieratic text on a limestone chip P 3811 (Allam 1973: 245, pl. 22), the ostrakon with a demotic text on a pottery sherd P 3904 (Grunert 1982) and the ostrakon with a demotic text P 3835 as well as the figured ostrakon P 2059 in a journal for general public (Lexa 1931). A general study on the lexis of the demotic ostraka appeared recently (Grunert 1987).

A comprehensive study on our demotic ostraka has been prepared for publication in the CAA Loseblatt-Katalog (Grunert, in press). Analogical studies on hieratic ostraka (L. Bareš, B. Vachala) and on Coptic ostraka (W. Oertel) are in preparation.

Figured Ostrakon P 2059 (Figs. 1 — 2)

A limestone slab with a straight smooth obverse and an uneven reverse flattened by rough chipping off. It was broken in two pieces and mended so that a strip across the middle is blank (20.5 × 30 cm, maximum thickness 3 cm). The obverse is decorated with a brush drawing outlined in black and partly coloured in red, white and bluish-green.

The drawing represents a king sitting on a throne. His position is rigid, majestic and hieratic. He is turned to the left and depicted in the traditional Ancient Egyptian manner with head in profile, shoulders in frontal view, chest in the $\frac{3}{4}$ view, and lower half of the body in profile. He wears the so-called blue crown (hprš), here coloured in black, to the front of which a raised cobra has been added. The facial profile is somewhat unusual because of the almost straight line connecting the forehead with a slightly protruding nose. Under the arched eyebrow, there is an exaggerated left eye, rendered in frontal view in white with an almond-shaped black frame. It is situated too low in relation

to the nose. The skin of the face, neck and of other naked parts of the body is coloured in red as typical for male figures in Ancient Egyptian art.

The king is dressed in a white tunic with short sleeves reaching below the shoulders. The lower tip of the tunic protrudes in front of the knees. Below the neck, the tunic is covered by a broad necklace wsh, composed of three arched rows originally of beads. The two upper rows were coloured white, the lower one greenish-blue. Part of the lower row is covered by a pectoral, a rectangular oblong tablet, originally of wood, provided with a protruding cornice. It hangs on a narrow band around the neck of the king, reaching there higher than seems to be natural. The right vertical portion of the band has not been fully preserved. The pectoral including the cornice was painted red. Left of the pectoral, the elevation of the right breast is visible through the tunic.

Both arms are drawn in an unskilled manner without rendering the muscular relief and details of the hands. The right upper arm is raised to the front in an angle of 45° to the longitudinal axis of the trunk and flexed in the elbow 90° upwards. Bracelets are indicated on the upper arm and on the lower end of the forearm. In his right hand the king holds a stick, on the lower half of which a papyrus blossom in the form of a reversed bell is attached. The left arm lies obliquely, only slightly bent in the elbow, with the forearm lying at the level of the belt. The stump-like left hand holds a partly missing symbol, most probably the nh.

The king's waist is bound with a broad white belt, whose middle third is covered by a narrow red band, continuing into the richly plaited red apron. On the upper edge of the apron there are three white leaf-shaped formations, from under the lower edge of which two narrow bands, the left one white and the right one red, protrude. From the tip of the lowest leaf-shaped formation and along the lower tip of the tunic a pair of thinner lines run obliquely towards the lower end of the stick. Their meaning is not clear.

The proportions of the parts of the left leg, shown in the profile and hiding the right leg, are poorly rendered. The thigh is too short in relation to the long shank. The shank is plump expressing imperfectly the muscular relief with only a very slight



Fig. 1



arching of the calf. The upper part of the foot has been only partially preserved. There was most probably no contact of the sole with the basal line.

The throne is composed of a back, lined with a layer of folded material, probably a cloth, and the seat, resembling a box with an empty space in its lower posterior part. The seat has an L-shaped frame crossed with short red stripes. Into it 18 horizontal layers representing different kinds of wood were inserted. Layers painted red, marked with black points arranged one above the other, alternate with uncoloured layers. (The first two upper layers are not coloured and between the two lowermost red layers there are two uncoloured ones.) The lines delimiting the layers are not straight, but somewhat irregular. Also the throne does not rest on the basal line.

A thick vertical line, ending above the king's stick, delineates the vertical hieroglyphic inscription. The uppermost signs read (from right to left) ntr nfr (the second being only partly preserved) meaning "Good god". Under them, we may discern parts of the signs nb t3wy, which means "The Lord of the Two Countries". A royal cartouche follows, of small height, unfortunately mostly destroyed by the break in the slab. In its lower right corner, however, the sign t may still be deciphered. Under the cartouche, signs nh dic, meaning "Given of life", are slightly visible.

In spite of the damaged state of the inscription the single preserved t in the lower right corner of the cartouche may serve as a clue for the determination of the name of the depicted king. Left of the preserved sign, there is a space for the presence of another t. Judging according to the small height of the cartouche, not more than three other signs may have originally filled it in vertical succession. Only a single royal prenom contains the double t written at the end and three additional signs above them: Mn-phtj-R^c. It belonged to king Ramses I, the founder of the 19th dynasty (about 1310—1309 B. C.).

Beside red colouring and lines, belonging to the present drawing, traces of an original sketch in red may be discerned in several other places. Two lines are visible on both sides of the two black lines running from the knee of the king to the lower end of the stick; another in the king's gluteal region, further along the folded cloth, etc.

The figure of a king with his written titles and name represents a conventional rendering following fixed rules whose aim was to stress the king's majesty. Although our artist observed these rules, certain unskilled, plump and careless features of his drawing (eye, extremities, throne, pectoral, etc.) reveal that his style was not yet mature. He could have been an advanced apprentice of a school of artists whose existence in Deir el-Medina seems to be beyond doubts.

Drawings of seated kings are common, conventional and in some cases almost stereotyped, but mostly of good quality (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 96 ff.). Their execution on ostraka most probably served as aid for their enlargement on the walls of royal as well as private tombs. Their relation to temple drawings is, however, open to question (Peterson 1973: 50—51). Kings were depicted while hunting, killing enemies or sitting in sedan-chairs or thrones, mostly, however, while bringing offerings or adoring different gods.

As analogy of our ostrakon we may quote a simple drawing of a king with a similar blue crown, seated on a throne beside which a lion is standing. The king is turned to right, his left arm raised (the hand carrying an object has not survived), his right arm folded and carrying a sceptre and a flail (Petersen 1973: 70, pl. 3, cat. no. 5). Another ostrakon from Deir el-Medina shows a king sitting on a throne, wearing a blue crown and facing to right, with a sceptre and a flail in his left hand and a lion in front of the throne. It was dated 19th dynasty, probably during the reign of Sethos I (1309—1290 B. C., Brunner-Traut 1975: 344, fig. 331 a).

Figured Ostrakon P 2060 (Figs, 3—4)

A flat limestone chip, whose obverse is almost straight and smooth, while the reverse has been chipped off by several blows (11.7 X 8.7 cm, maximum thickness 1.9 cm). On the obverse remnants of a considerably rubbed and smeared brush drawing, outlined in black, coloured black and red, have been preserved.

The drawing shows a man walking to right, who drives before him an ape marching on its four legs. The figure of the man is rendered in the usual Egyptian style with head in profile,

Fig. 3

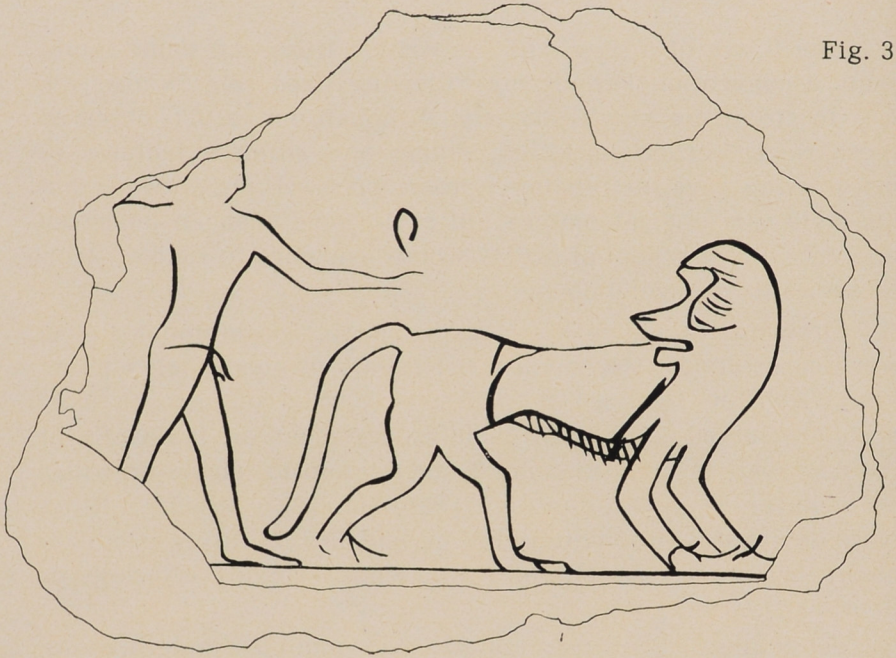
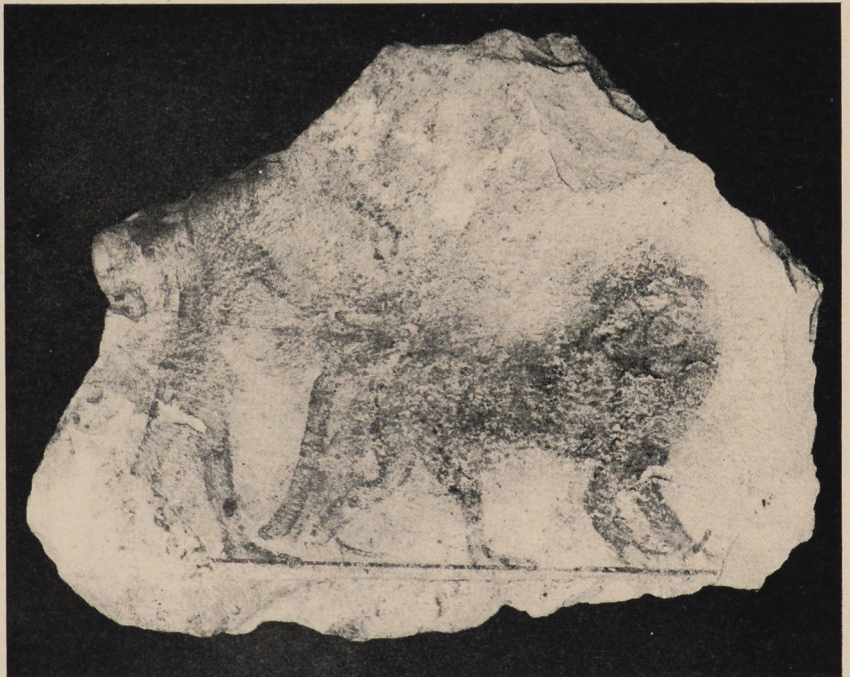


Fig. 4



shoulders in frontal view, chest in the $\frac{3}{4}$ view and the lower half of the body in profile. His left arm is almost stretched out forward with the hand about 5 mm above the tail of the ape. Apparently he was holding a rope to which the animal was attached. A loop on its end has been preserved over his hand. The man's right hand was most probably extended to the rear, perhaps holding a stick to urge the animal on. The outline of the man's body is drawn with thick black lines, its interior being coloured red, evidence of his nakedness. He wore only a penis sheath, fixed by a string around the waist. The feet of the man as well as the paws of the ape touch the straight basal line.

The ape may be determined zoologically as a baboon (*Papio hamadryas*) according to its large dimensions, body proportions and the long tail. It also walks to right with slightly flexed and parallelly set front legs and also flexed but straddled rear legs. There are upwards arched projections rising from its paws indicating the outstanding claws. The baboon turns its head back towards the man so that its snout and mane are visible in profile. On the lower margin of the belly short oblique strokes mark the area of long fur. The baboon's thick long tail is slightly S-shaped, reaching 3 mm above the basal line. Almost the whole body of the baboon except the mane and the lower part of the belly is coloured black. On the snout a slight trace of red has been preserved. The gluteal region, however, does not show any trace of red colour.

Apes, and particularly baboons, represent one of the most popular themes of ostraka. The scene of a man leading a baboon on a leash is common among them. Usually the man is taken for a caretaker, watchman or animal-keeper and mostly marked as Nubian or Negro according to the shaven head with only a few tufts of hair left (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 9, 16, Petersen 1973: 44). This would correspond with the import of baboons from Nubia or Punt (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 7). In our case the top of the man's head has not been preserved and the red colour of his body is more characteristic for an Egyptian. The caretaker is usually depicted swinging his stick above the baboon as was possibly the case also in our drawing. The baboon uses to walk on his four legs as in our case, sometimes, however, rises on its hind legs to dance or jump. These scenes were not designed for decoration of the tomb walls, but they could have been copied

on house walls and are also known as decorative motifs of small objects, e.g. of a bowl (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 19).

Our drawing is almost identical with several published examples of this scene (Vandier d'Abbadie 1936; 8—9, pls. IV—V, cat. nos. 2035—2038). A baboon marching to right with a red band around its neck and turning its head back is known from further fragments of the same scene (Daressy 1901: 19, cat. no. 25089, Vandier d'Abbadie 1936: 10, pl. VII, cat. no. 2044, p. 11, pl. VIII, cat. no. 2047, Petersen 1973: 97, pl. 55, cat. no. 104). A similar example shows an ape and fragmentary preserved man walking to left (Brunner-Traut 1979: 51, pl. XVIII, cat. no. 23).

From these examples we may conclude that on our specimen the man's raised right hand holding a stick was apparently broken off. Due to the rubbed surface of the drawing, we were unable to discern the red band around the baboon's neck or around his trunk, as shown in other examples, as well as the red colour of the gluteal part of its body and of the paws. Except for these deviations, caused by the bad state of preservation, our drawing can be ranged with other examples of its kind.

In all known scenes including the above-mentioned one, the baboon has not a mantle of long fur on the shoulders and front part of the body. Such a mantle is typical for males of this species who cannot be easily tamed. Apparently the drawings show exclusively females, whose milder character allowed them to be driven for amusement (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 7).

Figured Ostrakon P 2061 (Figs. 5—6)

A limestone chip with a convex obverse and a roughly chipped off reverse. It has an irregularly oval outline, most of the margin being thinned into a sharp edge except its right side and the right half of the lower margin, where the chip is thickest (10.6 X 7.5 cm, maximum thickness 3 cm). The convex obverse, probably the original surface of the rock, bears a brush drawing in black colour over a red sketch whose remnants can be detected in places.

The drawing is a hunting scene, showing two cheetahs (*Acinomyx jubatus*) attacking a fleeing oryx (*Oryx dammah* or *beisa*). For zoological comments on these diagnoses see the following paper by Dr. Dale J. Osborn.

The oryx is depicted in profile fleeing to right with strained body, forward stretched neck, elevated head and almost horizontally placed long horns. Its stretched rear legs form an 50° angle with the longitudinal axis of the body, the hooves touching the basal line, which corresponds to the terrain. The animal is shown obviously taking off with its rear legs, while its stretched front legs (the left in an angle of 25° , the right in an angle of 40° with the longitudinal axis of the body) float above the basal line. Thus the moment of the start of a jump is expressed. In the same time, the lolled out, horizontally protruding tongue of the oryx expresses the utmost effort to run as fast as possible to escape the predators. Also the position of the tail in an angle of 50° with the longitudinal axis of the body betrays a quick run. By the movement of the rear legs the large scrotum, revealing the male sex of the animal, was fully exposed, hanging somewhat obliquely due to the run.

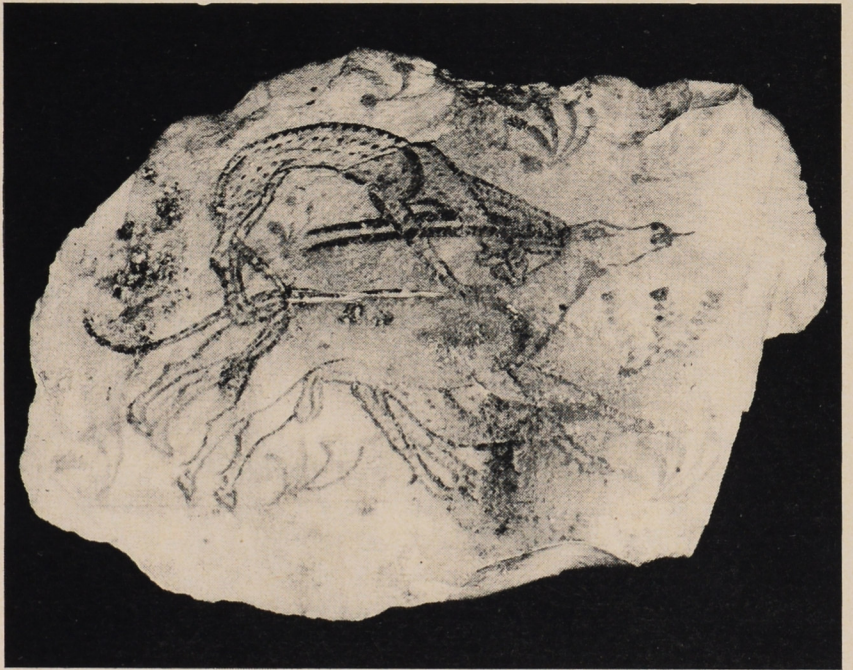
Two cheetahs attacking the fleeing oryx are shown also in profile directed to right. One of them is running side by side with the prey, touching with the paw of its stretched right front leg the basal line. Its left front leg has been curiously twisted by 180° so that the paw is shown in the reversed profile. The stretched rear legs, shown behind and parallelly with the rear legs of the oryx, float high above the basal line. The cheetah is thus shown also in a jump, but in its end, in contrast to the jump of the oryx. The very long tail with an S-shaped curvature flutters behind the running animal. Almost the whole trunk of the cheetah is hidden by the rear half of the oryx' body. The neck of the cheetah, twisted in continuation of the S-curve of its tail and invisible trunk, ends with a small triangular head viewed from above, to express the characteristic features of the face and its markings. The mouth of the beast of prey appears to be grasping the right front leg of the oryx.

The other cheetah is shown after a successful jump onto the back of the fleeing oryx. There it stands firmly, grasping with the paws of his straddled front legs, both completely stretched, the oryx' body. The right front paw touches at the transition of the trunk and neck, the left front paw reaches more forwardly at the forehead between the roots of both horns. Between the straddled legs the predator pulls out his strong neck with the characteristic



Fig. 5

Fig. 6



hump at its root, parallelling the direction of his right front leg. At the end of the neck, the small head is shown from above. Its muzzle bites at the neck of the oryx, fixing thus the standing position of the predator above the prey. In the same time, the rear legs of the cheetah, both depicted in a quiet standing position close together and perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis of its body, somewhat bent in the hocks, do not rest on the back of the oryx, but appear to stand on the buttocks of the first cheetah. We cannot decide if this was an intention of the artist to increase the complexity of the scene, or a mistake of his composition. Also the long tail of the second cheetah, hanging vertically with an S-shaped curvature between the rear legs, expresses the fixed position of this animal in contrast with the running of the other predator and the prey.

The whole scene is set in a semidesert, characterized by scarcely dispersed bunches of plants. Eight of them have been shown, arranged into empty spaces of the composition. Two different species are depicted, whose botanical determination is not possible due to their schematic execution. Seven of them, belonging to one type, are of fan shape consisting of three, four or five stalks ending with triangular, campanulate or roundish blossoms. Three of them grow out of the basal line, one before the front hooves of the oryx, the second in the space between its rear legs and the front legs of the first cheetah, and the third behind the oryx' rear paws. Another bunch was inserted in the angle concluded by the tail of the first cheetah and the rear legs of the second one. Three other bunches frame the scene in a less regular sloping row from right to left, the first above the snout of the oryx, the second above the left front leg of the second cheetah and the third above the front third of its trunk. This row could have continued with one or two bunches in the upper left corner of the ostrakon, where it was secondarily chipped off.

A different kind of plant is shown in the angle between the neck with the head and the left front leg of the oryx. It consists of three stalks, not apparent on the drawing, with oppositely located pairs of leaves. The stalks end with triangular blossoms. It might not be by chance that all the plant bunches show stalks convexly curved to right with blossoms bent to left. This could

possibly mean that the artist wished to show wind blowing from the right. At the same time, it adds to the dynamism of the scene.

The drawing was executed by calm definite lines. Only the bodies of both cheetahs are marked by rows of small black spots, missing on most of the rear legs of the first animal and on the right front leg of the second one, having been possibly rubbed off. Thick black stripes were used in depicting the long horns of the oryx, the thicker rear third of its tail, its tongue and the arched folds at the shoulders of the oryx and the second cheetah as well as the plants.

In many places of the original piece it can be seen that the definitive drawing was preceded by a sketch in red colour. It is most apparent at the lower middle plant, where it surpasses the black drawing. Trace of a straight red line may be found in the space between the rear legs of the oryx and the rear legs of the first cheetah. The neck of the oryx seems to have been originally painted in red colour. Around the snout of the oryx a fan-like formation of red strokes can be observed. The body, neck and left front leg of the second cheetah are reddish, obviously because the spotting was originally made in red.

The described scene of an attack of two cheetahs at the fleeing oryx has to be considered a work of art of a gifted and experienced artist. Its general composition inserted into an oblong and evenly filled space is well thought over. The exact characterization of the depicted animals betrays a good knowledge of their anatomy and characteristic features. At the same time, the artist succeeded in expressing dynamism of the scene. The speed of the running oryx and the first cheetah contrasts with the firmly adhering and seemingly motionless second cheetah and with the opposite „movements“ of the plants. The scene is also charged by dramatic tension, expressed by the prey fleeing in vain and by the merciless attack of both beasts of prey, whose elegantly curved bodies express elasticity of movement and rapacious strength. There is a certain hint of psychology in the expression of the oryx' face with the lolled tongue, showing exhaustion and deadly fear. The artist framed the scene also with its environment, the semidesert characterized by two different plants or shrubs. He was quite able to use the perspective in depicting objects which would be covered in profile, viz.

the horns of the oryx, the double outline of the scrotum, caused by the two testicles, both rear legs of the second cheetah etc.

There are many hunting scenes published in the literature on figured ostraka; however, we were unable to find an analogy showing both animal species acting in our scene. We may only quote an oryx with almost straight horns running to right, but with its head turned back and without beasts of prey, drawn with far less skill than did our artist (Petersen 1973: 99, pl. 61, cat. no. 117).

Usually in the hunting scenes a dog or several dogs attack different prey, such as hyena (Brunner-Traut 1975: 345, fig. 335 b, Vandier d'Abbadie 1936: 44, pl. XXVI, cat. no. 2211), ibex (Vandier d'Abbadie 1936: 44, pl. XXVII, cat. no. 2213), gazelle (Vandier d'Abbadie 1936: 45, pl. XXVIII, cat. no. 2216), antelope (Forman and Kischkewitz 1971, pl. 6), cow antelope (*Alcephalus buselaphus*) (Brunner-Traut 1956: 113, pl. XL, cat. no. 127) or even a lion (Daressy 1901: 17, pl. XVII, cat. no. 25084).

In dealing with the hunting scenes in desert depicted on the ostraka from Deir el-Medina, B. E. J. Petersen (1973: 46—47) points out that they do not contain large compositions, but rather details, showing desert animals, often with subtle psychological characteristics. Scenes drawn on the ostraka could have been sketches for paintings on the walls of private tombs (Vandier 1964: 815 ff.) or on smaller objects of art (Daressy 1902, pl. 11, Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: 55 ff., Capart 1931, pl. 74). As popular examples of the last category we may quote objects from the Tut^cankhamūn's tomb decorated by hunting scenes, as his bow case (Fox 1952, pl. 52), gold dagger sheath (Edwards 1976, cat. no. 36), wooden chest (Champdor 1957: 106, pl. on p. 107) or even his tunic (Crowfoot and Davies 1941). Hunting scenes are also known from reliefs on the temple walls, e.g. at Medinet Habu (Porter and Moss 1972: 516).

In his comparative analysis of Egyptian and Mycenaean hunting scenes Vermeule (1981: 197—198) concluded that — taking into account the faunistic differences, mostly hyenas and antelopes in Egypt, bulls and deer in Greece — the compositions have many common features, e.g. “the predators leap at the victim from the rear, the top and often underneath”, “both cultures are interested in the texture of hide and fur” and “the speed and velocity of the attack” are often expressed. Moreover,

"the Egyptian artist more often notes the pain inflicted on the victim, its startled incomprehension at the sudden snap". All these features may be observed also in our scene. The close connection of both artistic spheres may be demonstrated also on an ostrakon with a scene of an attack of three dogs on a stripped hyena from Deir el-Medina (19th dynasty), which has the closest analogy in the roughly contemporary hunt on a boar from a fresco fragment at Tiryns (Brunner-Traut 1975: 345, Bossert 1937, pl. 35).

Oryx was a well known animal across Egyptian culture and there is a profusion of its depictions. Starting with prehistoric objects, we may mention experiments with its domestication in several scenes (e.g. Newberry 1893, pl. XXVII, XXX) or its utilisation as offering of the king to the gods (Darby, Chalioungui and Grivetti 1977, I:235). An oryx was the emblem of the 16th nome of Upper Egypt.

In contrast, pictures of cheetahs are rare. We may find an example of them in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Amenemhet at Beni Hasan (tomb no. 2) among other desert animals as gazelles, antelopes and ibexes in the scene of "hunting in the desert with nets" (Newberry 1893: 32, pl. XIII). During the New Kingdom it may be included in imports brought to Egypt from the South (Drenkhan 1967: 117 ff.). On the Tut^cankhamūn's gold dagger sheath a cheetah is shown attacking an ibex in the same way as the second cheetah in our drawing attacks the oryx, while a lion is biting at the ibex' belly (Edwards 1976, cat. no 36). The use of cheetahs as trained hunting animals has been assumed, but without definite proof (Störk 1977).

It is worth mentioning that the second species of depicted plants in our drawing has an exact analogy in the decoration of pavement around the basin of the palace Marou-Aten, one of the Akhenaten's residences at Tell el-Amarna (Capart 1947: 30, pl. 701, lower right, Peet and Woolley 1923, pl. XXXVIII). The use of plant motifs surrounding our scene was most probably not decorative, but intended to give an idea on the environment of the action (cf. the note on the limits of decorative and naturalistic motifs in Petersen 1973: 51).

The described ostrakon ranks with the best examples of hunting scenes in Ancient Egyptian art. It increases the hitherto

known range of their themes. In spite of the fact that data on its provenance is lacking, it may be ranged on stylistic and thematic grounds to the source of the majority of known ostraka — the royal workmen village at Deir el-Medina (Helck 1980) and dated in the New Kingdom period.

If our determination and dating holds, the content of our scene confirms that still in the second half of the second millennium B. C. there were places in the semidesert at the outskirts of the Nile valley in Upper Egypt where wild oryxes and cheetahs could be currently found. Recently, only a single individual of *Oryx dammah* was seen near the Siwa Oasis road and there is no mention of the survival of *Oryx beisa* in Egypt (Osborn and Helmy 1980: 481). Sporadic occurrence of cheetahs is limited to the Qattara depression in the northern half of the Western Desert and in the Northern Sinai (Osborn and Helmy 1980: 456, 459).

S u m m a r y

From the series of 148 ostraka in the Ancient Egyptian collection of the Department of Prehistory and Antiquity of Middle East and Africa, Náprstek Museum, section of the National Museum in Prague, three figured ostraka have been described and arranged into their context. The first, depicting a common hieratic image of an enthroned king, determined as Ramses I, reveals a somewhat careless execution in the work of an apprentice of the school of artists at Deir el-Medina. The second belongs to the common type of ostraka depicting a man with a baboon on a leash, but its state of preservation is not good. The third is an artistically very well elaborated hunting scene showing an attack of two cheetahs on a fleeing oryx. It represents a new and superb composition in the range of known hunting scenes.

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t

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